

Remarks

Claims 1, 7 and 9 are amended. Claims 1 to 11 are pending in this application of which claims 3 to 6 are withdrawn.

Claims 1, 7 and 9 are in independent form.

Claims 9 to 11 were objected to only as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Accordingly, claim 9 is amended to incorporate therein all the features and limitations of claims 1 and 8 from which it had depended. Claims 10 and 11 are both dependent from claim 9. Accordingly, claims 9 to 11 should now be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1 and 7 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) separately as being anticipated by Geno and Thurow et al. The following will show that claims 1 and 7, as amended, patentably distinguish the invention over these two references.

Referring to Geno, it can be seen that clamping band 32 holds the flexible member against the inside wall of an end structure defining an inverted U-shaped annular space 54. Accordingly, this clamping arrangement causes a rolled end 51 to be formed in the flexible member so that it is not possible for the upper end portion of the flexible member to lie flat against a peripherally-extending supporting surface and be provided with lateral support for each deflection of the air spring. Because of the rolled end 51 shown in FIG. 7 of Geno, it is not possible for the upper end portion of the flexible member to lie flat against the wall surface of the annular cavity.

With respect to Thurow et al, multiple elements coact to

hold the flexible member. First, there is the base surface provided by the attachment part 15 and then, there is the support bell 24 and finally the clamp band 51 as shown in FIG. 2 of this reference.

In contrast to both Geno and Thurow et al, the applicants' invention provides that the first end portion of the flexible member lies flat against the support bell and that this is achieved with only two elements, namely, the support bell itself and the clamp ring. This can be seen, for example, in applicants' FIG. 2 where only the clamp ring 12-II and support bell 16-II coact to hold the upper end portion of the flexible member 4. Claim 1 has been extensively amended and now emphasizes this feature and limitation with the clause:

"said clamp ring being disposed on said support bell so that only said clamp ring and said support bell conjointly act to cause said first end portion of said rolling-lobe flexible member to always lie flat against said surface and be laterally supported thereby for each deflection of said air spring during operation thereof."

(emphasis added)

The above clause emphasizes that it is only the support bell and the clamp ring which coact to cause the lateral support to be provided for the flexible member during operation of the air spring. There is no suggestion in either Geno or Thurow et al which could possibly lead our person exercising only ordinary skill to arrive at the above feature and limitation of applicants' claim 1.

Claim 7 is now in independent form and incorporates the following feature and limitation:

"said support bell has an open end facing away from said cover and toward said roll-off piston and said support bell further having a cylindrical cross section adjacent said cover and said support bell being configured to expand elliptically in cross section toward said open end thereof in the manner of an oval-shaped funnel."
(emphasis added)

Claim 7 is amended to emphasize that the cross section of the support bell opens in the manner of an oval-shaped funnel as described in the applicants' disclosure on page 5, lines 14 to 16. This feature is nowhere suggested in Geno and Thurow et al.

FIG. 3 of Geno shows a bottom plan view of the air spring of FIG. 1 where it can be seen that this air spring is of circular cross section. Nowhere in Geno is there any suggestion which could lead our person of ordinary skill to come up with the idea of a support bell having a non-rotational cross section as set forth in applicants' claim 7.

There is also no suggestion in Thurow et al which could help our person of ordinary skill in this regard. In the action, it is suggested that Thurow et al has a support bell configured to expand elliptically in cross section toward the open end thereof. However, no specific reference is made to Thurow et al which could possibly reveal this kind of a cross section, much less, a support bell expanding elliptically in cross section toward the open end thereof in the manner of an oval-shaped funnel as set forth in applicants' claim 7.

In view of the above, applicants respectfully submit that both claims 1 and 7 now patentably distinguish the applicants'

invention over both Geno and Thurow et al and should be allowable.

Claims 2 and 8 are both dependent from claim 1 so that these claims too should now be allowable.

Reconsideration of the application is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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